

The Best Verse of the Week

Patriotic Verse as Well as Samples of Just Regular Poetry

Your Best Bit

By Harold Seton.

War was declared,
And we prepared
With stamina and grit.
There was a loan,
And then was shown
How each could do his bit.

The war progressed.
With added zest,
We swore to see it through.
A second loan
Was then made known—
A better bit to do!

Now comes the time
For faith sublime;
Oh, hear your country's call!
A third loan's here.
Your course is clear;
Do your best bit of all!

Cock Your Bonnets!

By John Oxenham.

It was after that black night
When we'd won our first bit fight,
In the shadow of the pump-mill at Messines,
That a Brass-Head came and prattled
To us, feeling pretty rattled
With the things we'd done, and more with what we'd
seen;
And he said—
"Boys,—keep your bodies clean!
Boys,—keep your billets clean!
Boys,—cock your bonnets!
And, for God's sake, smile!"

And it bucked us up tremendous,
For the Boche had tried to end us,
Though we'd given him double dose for all we got;
And we'd gone through our probation,
And we'd saved a situation,
And the Big Pot put his finger on the spot;—
With his,—
"Boys,—keep your bodies clean!
Boys,—keep your billets clean!
Boys,—cock your bonnets!
And, for God's sake, smile!"

So we pass it on to you chaps;—
When you're some fed up with new scraps,
Just remember what that good old Brass-Head said.
You will find it worth your trying,
Both while living and when dying,
And you'll surely be the happier when you're dead,—
If you,—

Always keep your bodies clean,
Always keep your billets clean,
Always cock your bonnets,
And, for God's sake, smile.

From *The Fiery Cross*. (George H. Doran Company.)

The Home-Land

By Witter Bynner.

It's a certain voice, it's the sound
Of a bell in a distant tower,
It's sunlight on the ground
Through trees or after a shower,
It's a certain roof under a certain sky,
The fragrance of the path of a certain street,
A steeple with a farm kneeling near by,
The feeling of the grass under the feet,
The flash of a look, the faltering of a hand,
A something from the past too quick to understand—
It's what one feels and cannot say
Even when one sings,
Though that's the nearest way,
It's all those things.
It's what one tastes and sees,
It's what one breathes and hears,
It's a smoke, it's melodies,
Bright leaves, a wind that veers,
The common sights and sounds,
Dogs barking, people greeting,
A mug of ale that pounds and pounds
A table at some meeting—
It's what one feels and cannot say
Even when one sings,
Though that's the nearest way,
It's all those things.
It's the body's very best,
It's the heart beat in the side
For children at the breast,
It's remembering those who died,
It's the ardor of the way,
It's the savor of the song,
It's the dream, aching to stay,
And the passion, to belong,
The sower's will to reap,
The lover's will to keep—
It's what one feels and cannot say
Even when one sings,
Though that's the nearest way,
It's all those things.

From the *Metropolitan*: After Emile Cammaert's *The Love of Country in New Belgian Poems*. (John Lane Company.)

Red McHugh

By Hal Reid.

Red McHugh lay low in the trench, and cursed his gun
for a dirty wench,
Because the trigger was full of clay, and it took some
trouble to clean it away,
And so he cleaned her from butt to tip, with a cigarette
stuck to his lower lip,
And he didn't duck when a piece of shell came hurtling
across from the Hun-made hell.

Red had killed his man, they say, and fooled the enlist-
ment in his "getaway."
His character would never have passed him through to
do his bit for his country too.
Sdrlly and cross, a curse or a frown, from the morning
light till the sun went down,
Red McHugh was a nasty cuss, and game to the core in
a fight or a muss.

He listened close to a stealthy sound, and grasping his
gun he whirled around,
And a grizzled sergeant stood close by, and dug his fist
in his dirty eye.
"It's bad news I have fer ta tell ye, Red. They've
torped the Tuscanny troop ship," he said,
"And near two hundred have taken lave av the sarvice
by way av a wathery grave."

Red jumped up from the clay and sand, and shot a look
over No Man's Land,
And the sergeant jerked him down with an oath, as a
hundred bullets whizzed over them both.
"Have ye no sinse at all, Red McHugh? Do you think
there's no bullit that's made for you?
"They're snipin' the shadows that pass this day. Are
ye wantin' to die by the bullits' way?"

Red shook him off with a grumbling sound, and
cautiously pecked o'er the sand made mound.
He turned where a pile of grenades lay, and stuffed
pockets and blouse like a boy at play.
And then like a flash, over the top, with never a quiver
nor ever a stop,
He walked at ease, so the soldiers say, as if he were
strolling along Broadway.

The sergeant pecked and his face went white, he rubbed
his eyes to see aright,
For Red stopped still, he could see him yet, from his
"makins" rolling a cigarette.
He walked ahead in an easy way, and the soldiers saw a
sight that day.
The Germans watched with bated breath, and not one
sped a missile of death.

Red McHugh walked straight ahead; there wasn't a
sound, not a word was said.
Straight walked he to the enemy wire, and yet the Ger-
mans withheld their fire.
Red had no gun, no sword, and they could not make out
why he came that way.
On up to the side of the trench went he, until the heads
of the Huns he could see.

They could not fathom this madman's ruse, and all of a
sudden hell broke loose.
From pocket and blouse the grenades flew, "The good
ship Tuscanny sends these to you,"
And he stood his ground, half a hundred sped. "Now
give me mine," is what he said,
In a flash he lay there, still and dead—just Red Mc-
Hugh.

Slacker!

He said he'd like to have a chance
To fight by land or sea,
Yet in an absent minded way
Put four lumps in his tea.
From the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

The Gypsy Girl

By Ralph Hodgson.

"Come, try your skill, kind gentlemen,
A penny for three tries."
Some threw and lost, some threw and won
A ten-a-penny prize.

She was a tawny gypsy girl,
A girl of twenty years,
I liked her for the lumps of gold
That jingled from her ears;

I liked the flaring yellow scarf
Bound loose about her throat,
I liked her showy purple gown
And flashy velvet coat.

A man came up, too loose of tongue,
And said no good to her;
She did not blush, as Saxons do,
Or turn upon the cur;

She fawned and whined, "Sweet gentleman,
A penny for three tries!"
—But, oh, the den of wild things in
The darkness of her eyes.

From *Georgian Poetry, 1916-1917*. (G. P. Putnam's Sons.)

Make It Three!

By Earl Baldwin Thomas.

Over the pond the seagulls wing, they've gone into
service fast;
In old Lorraine the eagle screams, for his flag flies there
at last;
Over the seas and into France where the snaky trenches
twine,
To the vineyard land where the grapes are dead—they're
gone, both yours and mine.

Yours and mine, with an Enfield each, and an acre of
mud to boot,
Nestling down near the firing step, waiting the order to
shoot.
Waiting for news from the old home town; what will the
message be?
The logical flash to send is this: "Our bonds now
number three!"

Over the waters and into France—God, it's beginning
to thaw!
The sector square in front of them, and hell a-ripping
raw;
Shot and gas for yours and mine—we've got to do some-
thing to aid;
Why, buy a bond as we did before, see that the bills are
paid!

Over the seas and on the line, kids who grew up in
town;
With resolute heart and steel cased nerve, Jonesy and
Smith and Brown—
Swamps and rain and bugs galore—we here in our com-
fortable chairs,
They're up against it, mine and yours, and all that we've
got is theirs!

Supposing you buy a bond to-day, where do you think
it will go?
Clothes and shoes and plenty of food, but, Lord, we all
of us know
It's ships and guns to wallop the Huns, food for Yankee
line,
And a tank or two to carry through when we set off the
hidden mine!

The Reverse Twist

By W. W. H.

"The war time novels have a vogue,"
Said John Montgomery Barnes;
"But they cannot hold a candle
To the novel war time yarns!"

From the *Spokane Spokesman-Review*.

After the War

By a Wayfarer.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is High Wood,
Called by the French, Bois des Fornaux.
The famous spot which in Nineteen Sixteen,
July, August, September, was the scene
Of long and bitterly contested strife,
By reason of its high commanding site.
Observe the effect of shellfire on the trees
Standing and fallen; here is wire; this trench,
For months inhabited, twelve times changed hands;
(They soon fall in), used later as a grave.
It has been said on good authority
That in the fighting for this patch of wood
Were killed somewhere about eight thousand men,
Of whom the greater part were buried here,
This mound on which you stand being . . .

Madam, please.

You are requested kindly not to touch
Or take away the Comp'ny's property
As souvenirs: you'll find we have on sale
A large variety, all guaranteed.
As I was saying, all is as it was,
This is an unknown British officer;
The tunic having lately rotted off.
Please follow me—this way . . . the path, sir,
please.

The ground which was secured at great expense
The Company keeps absolutely untouched,
And in that dugout (genuine) we provide
Refreshments at a reasonable rate.
You are requested not to leave about
Paper or ginger beer bottles, or orange peel.
There are waste paper baskets at the gate."
From the *Montreal Daily Star*.

Canticle

By William Griffith.

Devoutly worshipping the oak,
Wherein the barred owl stares,
The little feathered forest folk
Are praying sleepy prayers.

Praying the summer to be long
And drowsy to the end,
And daily full of sun and song,
That broken hopes may mend.

Praying the golden age to stay
Until the whip-poor-will
Appoints a windy moving day,
And hurries from the hill.

From *City Pastorals and Other Poems*: (James T. White & Company.)